Health of Home and School.

LEAFLET No. 1.

ISSUED BY THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF MAINE.

Cold weather diseases.

Pneumonia, bronchitis, grip, and common colds, are called cold weather diseases. In the last ten years, in Maine, these diseases destroyed in the four months, January to April, 8,332 lives and in the four months of settled milder weather, from June to September, only 1,976. Aside from these diseases there are other cold weather troubles. Many people do not winter out well. In the spring they find themselves all run down, so they say, and many children, pale and puny, are sent from the city to the country or to our health resorts in early summer, where they make wonderful recoveries.

What does that mean?

Does it mean that the climate of our cold season is of itself less healthful than that of our warm season? Perhaps, but let us see.

Explorers in the Polar regions have found those parts remarkably free from these diseases, and, returning, suffer from attacks of grip, colds, or of the other so-called cold weather diseases soon after coming back to civilization.

An influential gentleman of this state, after roughing it in our Northern Maine woods, came down promptly with a dangerous attack of pneumonia after he had been exposed to the stuffy air of an ill-ventilated hotel bed room.

In the northern sanatoriums for consumptives, where patients live in the open air and sleep in the open air through the inclement winters, properly protected by clothing, of course, these cold weather diseases are much less prevalent than in the homes from which they come, and besides they recover from their tuberculous disease much more rapidly in winter than in summer.

Then what is the cause?

Or, we should ask, what are the causes, for there appears to be more than one cause. We shall simplify matters if we place them under two or three general classes:

1st. Artificial conditions of our own making.

The most influential of these is undoubtedly foul-air poisoning. We fail to ventilate or "air out" our living rooms, sleeping rooms, school rooms, churches, and places of business. The air is robbed of its health-giving part—its oxygen—by the process of breathing, and also by the flames of gas or oil lamps. Still worse, respiration and combustion both add to the air matter which is actually poisonous and harmful just in proportion to the absence of ventilation and the stuffy condition of the rooms.

Then again, our stoves and furnaces give off dangerous gases because we do not manage them intelligently.

Another fault is that we generally keep our rooms too warm. The

temperature of our living rooms and school rooms should never go above 70° F., and not much below 68°. But the English think that 60° or 65° is warm enough for their school rooms. That is because they do not coddle their children in houses that are overheated as we do.

And we certainly do overheat our houses awfully. A temperature of 75° to 80° is debilitating, as cold air is a tonic and such overheated air is too dry for healthfulness. Kitchen air is usually better than living room air because the steaming teakettle adds moisture.

Again, in close, unventilated rooms, the infection of the infectious diseases, if any happen to be around, becomes dangerously concentrated. And such infections are around much oftener than most of us think. For instance, many of us carry the germs of pneumonia or of grip in the secretions of our mouth, nose, or throat when we appear to be perfectly well, waiting to master us when imprudently we reduce our natural powers of resistance, or gathering in force and thriving in the foul air of our rooms until they overcome other persons.

2nd. Infection.

The preceding paragraph is suggestive of this. These cold weather diseases are infectious diseases. The germ of grip (influenza) and that which causes most cases of pneumonia are well-known and have been studied well. Colds are plainly infectious, but are probably caused by more than one kind of infectious agent. So, we may say that the real cause, the essential cause, of these winter diseases, is infection, and that all other causes are merely exciting or helping causes.

3rd. The effect of a draft or chilling.

This properly belongs in class 1st. While living under normal conditions, low temperatures have no intrinsic tendency to cause these diseases. But with the body debilitated by unfavorable conditions, and the way paved by them, a draft may be dangerous. It may serve as an exciting, or contributory cause.

How may we prevent these diseases?

By ventilating or airing out rooms frequently. Of course it costs a little more for fuel; but it is a kind of life insurance that pays. School rooms particularly should have a good system of ventilation. Sleep at all times with open windows—wide open preferably, protecting against direct draft and protecting the top of the head if the hair does not suffice.

Do not spit all around, well or sick. Destroy with fire, or otherwise, what is coughed up or spit out by persons who have these cold weather diseases. Coughing as a fine art, when sick with these diseases or with tuberculosis, requires a piece of cheese cloth or paper before the mouth to prevent spraying infection into the air. Then burn the pieces. Remember your good manners, and do not cough into anybody's face or toward others. Remember, too, that loud open mouthed coughing is out of style nowadays and a nuisance. Repress unnecessary coughing. It will be better for you and for others. Do not be unusually chummy because you have a cold or the grip. Keep away from other people as much as you can. Acts of carelessness in these respects may slay our best friends, or cause them needless suffering.

Read this Leaflet No. 1 carefully, and then keep it to be filed with others to follow.